

THE PRAYER THAT  
JESUS TAUGHT

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JESUS TAUGHT

BY

THOMAS CHALMERS STRAUS ✓



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## CHAPTER I

### GOD OUR FATHER

After this manner, pray ye: "Our Father who art  
in heaven."

**T**WO questions have held a prominent place in the religious thought of our time. The first is, What is Christianity? The second is: What is the distinct contribution of Christianity to the religious heritage of mankind?

To the first of these, the answer must be essentially this: Christianity is the religious message which has been brought to man in and through Jesus Christ. That which has originated from Jesus; what Jesus taught and lived and manifested; what Jesus did and experienced and attested; what was in Jesus and shone forth and spoke out from him—this is Christianity in its inmost being. In proportion as we interpret Jesus aright to ourselves, we grasp the Christian message. In proportion as

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we interpret Jesus aright to the world, we give the Christian message.

It is freely conceded that historical developments are not to be ignored or belittled. Our own ideas of Christianity have come to us largely along the lines of these developments. The movement back to Christ must not lead us to reject all the fruitage of Christian thought which the centuries have stored. But all this fruitage must undergo revaluation. The test of vital agreement with Christ must be constantly and unsparingly applied. Accretions that are out of accord with Christ must be resolutely cut away. Presentations which fail to embody Christ's vital teaching must be resolutely discarded as inadequate. The testing of historical developments is indispensable if Christianity is to minister, in the full measure of its potency, to the world of today.

If now we ask further, what is the definite contribution of Christianity, thus conceived, to the religious heritage of the world, we shall hear a manifold answer, as different groups or individual minds give us their impressions of Jesus and emphasize one or another phase of

his teaching. But amidst all the diversity, which in itself witnesses to the unsearchable riches of Christ, there will be one reply upon which agreement will be general. That reply will be: The Fatherhood of God. Whatever other contributions Christianity has made to our religious possessions, this one stands out with especial clearness.

The Fatherhood of God stands in the forefront of the Christian message. Its distinctness and prominence in Christianity make it pre-eminently a Christian teaching rather than a general truth common to all religions. This teaching is sometimes found outside of Christianity, it is true. But where it exists outside of Christianity, it appears only in dim and obscure form. Glimpses of it were caught, by men of specially gifted insight, even before Christianity arose. But it was never a part of the popular belief. The few superior minds that had some idea of it never developed and applied it. It never was held or taught as a living faith. One classic instance of a mind outside of Christianity that had some glimpse of the teaching is brought to our notice in the New Testa-

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ment. This is the Greek poet, Cleanthes, the Stoic, from whom Paul quoted in his speech on the Areopagus in Athens. Paul was seeking some common standing ground on which to meet the curious audience that gathered about him on that occasion, and he found it in the line from the Hymn of Cleanthes: "For we also are his offspring." Paul quoted this as against idolatry and as leading to his doctrine of the spirituality of God. But while the Greek poet had said this, its meaning and implications were not worked out. The teaching had no influence on the religious thought of the people. It was not wrought into their faith. So, in general, while it is true that the idea of the divine Fatherhood is not wholly absent from religious utterances outside of Christianity, the fact remains that it is through Christianity that this conception has become a living factor in religious faith.

It is Jesus Christ who has given this teaching its distinctness and prominence. It is he who has set it in the forefront. In his teaching, "The Father" is the characteristic title for God. Sixteen times in that body of teaching which we call the sermon on the mount—sixteen

times within the three chapters which Matthew gives us—Jesus applies this title to God. Consistently with this characteristic use of the title, in his own teaching, when the Master seeks to teach us how to pray, he bids us approach God with the same address: “Our Father, who art in heaven.”

This teaching was given in the presence of the multitudes. It was no secret, privileged teaching for the initiate, the little band of intimate disciples. The little group of intimates had drawn near to him, but all about him, within easy hearing, were the people who had come together from all the countryside of Galilee and from regions beyond. Any one, man or woman, boy or girl, of whatever condition in life, might hear that word and take it home and act upon it. “After this manner, pray ye, Our Father, who art in heaven,” was for all. There was no restriction or limitation or exclusion. To every one Jesus said: Base your approach to God upon this assurance, He is our Father. Take this thought of God into your mind and heart as the ruling thought in your approach to him.

Moreover, when Jesus puts the Fatherhood

of God in the forefront of his teaching, as the ruling principle of right approach to God, he deals with it as established fact. We never find him arguing for it as one might argue for a proposition that needs to be proved. Not even does he lay it down as a doctrine to be affirmed in a creed. He simply takes it as reality, which is to govern the whole religious life. As God himself is to Jesus an unquestioned reality, so is the Fatherhood of God. Seeing and knowing the Fatherhood of God as a reality, Jesus seeks to show us what this contains for the human spirit—what it means for the religious life of mankind.

First of all, he shows us what the divine Fatherhood means for himself. A father implies a child. The counterpart and correlative of fatherhood is sonship. To Jesus Fatherhood in God means Sonship in himself. Jesus knew himself as the Son of God. The consciousness of Sonship was his abiding possession. It was the ruling consciousness of his life. By this consciousness his whole course was governed. He had it at his Baptism. He had it in the wilderness, where the tempter endeavored to becloud



it and weaken it and to move him to subject it to unworthy tests. He had it throughout his days of teaching and preaching and his ministry of healing. He had it in Gethsemane, and in Pilate's judgment hall, and on Calvary, and in his risen glory. Always, everywhere, this consciousness was with him. I make no attempt to separate his divine from his human consciousness in this regard. That may be possible in theology, but not in experience. It goes beyond anything that we know. Let it suffice to recognize that the whole attitude of mind and heart which Jesus reveals—the whole self knowledge to which his words and spirit bear witness, is that of perfect Sonship toward God. In perfect Sonship, Jesus knew what it meant to call God, Father. In that consciousness of Sonship—in that knowledge of what it meant to call God, Father, Jesus took his way through the world, lived and taught and wrought and suffered, and died and rose again.

Second, Jesus presents this thought of God as a necessity of the human spirit. We too must grasp the truth of the divine Fatherhood. We too must come into the consciousness of

sonship. We too must know ourselves as children of God.

This is a necessity of personal religion. To each one of us there falls the work of cultivating the spiritual life within himself. Nothing can take the place of this personal spiritual cultivation. And in order that we may make the spiritual life what it should be, we need to lay firm hold upon this truth of the divine Fatherhood and work it into our inmost consciousness. For the life in us needs to be in harmony with the life in Christ. And if we really follow Christ in the realm of the spirit, we shall follow him in his attitude towards God, in his thought of God, in his consciousness of himself in relation to God. It is a great thing to say; it may seem too great for people such as we know ourselves to be; but it is true, graciously true; Jesus wishes to give us a share in his own consciousness. He wants us to feel towards God as he feels. He wants us to have the same assurance of the Father's love and care and abiding presence. He wants us to know the same heavenly relationship.

It is just this sense of heavenly relationship

that will lift us out of the toils and the common-places and the monotonies of life and gild every common day with a glory from on high. To know God for our Father and to know ourselves as his children makes each of us of priceless worth. This is the glory of the Christian message. It lifts us up as no other teaching does. According to the Bible, our origin is lowly. We are made from the dust of the earth. A clod of earth is the starting point of our race. No lowlier origin than this is assigned us by evolutionary theory. Evolution starts us higher than the clod. The Bible begins with the clod. Science goes no farther back and our dignity has nothing to fear from its findings. Out of the clod there comes, by God's own processes, one who can call God, Father. Never mind the intervening steps. Be they many or few, they are past. Today, we stand with Jesus and gain from him the right to say to the Eternal Power and Love, "Our Father, who art in heaven."

But this heavenly relationship gives added sharpness to another consciousness—the consciousness of sin. To sin is to sin against a heavenly Father; not just to break the law of

a stern ruler; not just to break over the bounds of an arbitrary restriction; not just to assert our independence of authority; but to grieve a love that has never failed; to wound a heart that has never had a feeling but the warmest and truest kindness towards us; to fall from a fellowship with the Holiest; to degrade ourselves. And because this is the meaning of sin, the sense of sin must be all the sharper as we realize that God is still our Father, with a yearning love that waits and longs to save us from our sin and to hold us close to himself as his obedient and loving children. This is why the thought of the Fatherhood of God is so necessary to personal religion. It is essential to a right attitude towards sin and obedience. Once realized in its fulness of meaning, sin will be abhorrent to us, and every impulse of our souls will be towards obedience to the Father's will.

But in addition to personal religion,—our personal relation to God and the cultivation of the inner life—we have our relations with our fellow men. True religion is social as well as individual. Here too we need to be governed by the significance of the divine Fatherhood.

Our great moral problems today are social. We have made greater progress towards right personal morals than we have towards right social morals. This is an age of great social experiments, great social struggles, great social failures. Our social atmosphere is charged with selfishness, conflict, mutual distrust. Our international relationships, which are an extension of our national social relationships into the world field, are suffering from the same blighting condition. But one principle needs to be applied through all the length and breadth of these relations. Whether it be between one man and his neighbor, one social group and another social group, or one people and another people, all need to be brought under the sway of the Christian message of the Fatherhood of God.

Applied socially, this message means that the world is one great family. We all belong to the one Father. We owe it to God and to ourselves and to our fellowmen to develop a family life throughout this world that will be well pleasing to our Father in heaven. We owe it to God and ourselves and our fellow men to develop relationships that will be in accord with the thought

of a great human family under the divine Fatherhood. Whatever relations between man and man, or group and group, or people and people is not in harmony with this thought, we must eliminate. We must develop the social relations that correspond to the divine Fatherhood of us all. We must develop these relations not only within one people, but between one people and another people, and among all the peoples of the earth. We must have the social spirit that corresponds to the divine Fatherhood. This means that the conflicts and selfishness and mutual distrust, which today blight the relations of men throughout the world, must be put away, and that a spirit of kindness and peace and mutual confidence shall pervade and control our race. Our Father in heaven looks down and sees our discords, our social wrongs and all the suffering and pain they cause. He can not be well pleased. He would see love where now he sees hatred. He would see forgiveness where now he sees the spirit of revenge. He would see reconciliation where now he sees enmity. He would see healing where now he sees rankling wounds. He would see

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hands clasped in friendship which now are clenched to strike.

True Christianity — the message of Jesus Christ — has this to contribute to the world thought today. It is no new message. It has been in the world for nineteen centuries. But it needs a new application—a larger, world wide application. Only this can save the world. And it is for you and me and every believer in Jesus to repeat this message, to urge it with all earnestness, and to live it out with resolute love.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SPIRIT OF REVERENCE

“Hallowed be thy Name.”

**W**HOWER would truly minister to the human soul must recognize the instinct of prayer and provide for it. The instinct of prayer is innate. It is as wide spread as humanity in its prevalence. It is as varied as humanity in its expression. Wherever man is found, he prays. Varied as men are in their intelligence, their ways of thinking and their attainment of truth, so varied are they in their praying.

In past and present we find men praying to gods many and lords many. We find them praying to nature powers, to sun, moon, star, stream, fire and tree. We find them praying to things of their own making, wrought by art and man's device, of wood, stone, silver and gold. We find them praying to heroes of myth and legend, to ancestors, and to creatures of their own fancies. We find them praying to gods fantastic, gro-



tesque, repulsive, unrighteous, vicious, cruel. Through all the varied movement of human thought and life, this instinct of prayer has persisted. It is in our humanity, and it must be reckoned with by any one who would meet the felt wants of the human soul.

With this instinct everywhere witnessed among men, it was of necessity a part of the work of Jesus to recognize it and provide for it. Jesus came to lead us out of error into truth, out of sin into holiness. He came to give light for darkness, freedom for bondage, purity for uncleanness. In the fulfillment of this mission, he must lead away from superstition and degrading belief to healthy mindedness and ennobling faith. He must give reality for fancies, assurance for doubt, peace with God for guilty terror.

In dealing with the instinct of prayer, therefore, Jesus must guide and satisfy it. He must bring it to right expression and make it a power for holiness in the life of man. He must bring his light to bear upon this instinct of the soul as upon all else that dwells in our humanity. He must so teach and lead as to rid us of all that

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is unworthy and false or useless and to develop in us all that is valuable and genuine and efficient. Nothing that fails to contribute to the power and significance and worth of life is to be kept. Everything that makes for spiritual enrichment and effectiveness is to be encouraged and employed. Jesus therefore must purify and invigorate the prayer life as he purifies and invigorates life in all other phases.

Herein lies the significance of the fact that he taught his disciples how to pray. Luke says that they asked him to do this, and it was natural that they should do so. But he must have taught them, even if they had not asked. He must have shown those men and all to whom his word should come, what prayer is in the light of the truth which he reveals. He must bring prayer into relation with the rest of his message—the message of his life and works as well as the message uttered in his words.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Jesus begins this teaching by putting at the forefront his characteristic title for God. God is our Father. This title gives the ruling thought for the whole prayer which Jesus taught. The con-

ception of the divine Fatherhood dominates throughout. Whatever is said is said to the Father. Whatever is asked is asked of the Father. Whatever is expected is expected of the Father. Every petition or aspiration or ascription is to be viewed in the light of the divine Fatherhood.

And now, with this title for God and the conception of God which it carries, with the Name, Father, for God, Jesus gives us this sentiment: "Hallowed Be Thy Name."

I call this a sentiment, rather than a petition, because, while it is indeed a petition, in which a real desire of the heart comes to utterance, there is in it more than a petition. I call it a sentiment because it expresses that fineness of feeling out of which the best in human action springs. For just this is what sentiment is, when rightly understood. Sentiment is to be distinguished from sentimentality or sentimentalism. Sentimentality and sentimentalism are frayed out sentiment—the heart worn upon the sleeve—the exploiting of a shallow feeling which is impotent for good. But sentiment is a real heart possession. In every crisis of life it can be relied

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upon to align us upon the side of the best we know. It is direct in its vision and strong in its motive power. It is the feeling which gives impetus to action. Without sentiment life would be shorn of its beauty and sweetness. No doubt, there may be wrong sentiment, unenlightened sentiment, misguided sentiment. These have power for evil. But right sentiment, enlightened and wisely guided sentiment, is to be reckoned among the most potent of our moral resources.

It is sentiment of this high, pure and effective character that is expressed in these words which our Lord has taught us: "Hallowed be Thy Name." Hallowed be the Name of Our Father when we use it of God. Hallowed be the Name of God, who is Our Father. And here, remembering that Jesus is always seeking reality and bringing reality to us, we need to note that it is the reality of the sentiment, rather than the form of words, that Jesus would inculcate and emphasize. He is teaching us not merely to say the words, but to feel what they import. Words are easily said, lightly said, and even the words of Jesus, expressly given to

us to say, if said lightly and without inner sympathy and meaning, have no more spiritual value than the vain repetitions of the heathen, against which the Master warns us. But to have in our hearts the sentiment which the words express is to make this teaching a part of ourselves, so that it shall be a potent factor in our religious life.

This sentiment of reverence for God Our Father, which Jesus inculcates, belongs to the recognition of God's Fatherhood. The thought of God's Fatherhood is calculated to correct all harsher or sterner conceptions of God. As the ruling thought of God in Christian belief, it must control and color our thinking about God in the other relations and characters in which the Bible represents him—in the relations and characters of Lawgiver and Moral Governor and Judge of all the earth. He is all these, and Jesus so represents him, but in all these relations, he is still Father. It is as Father that he gives us laws and governs and judges. He who says "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not"; He who holds the reins of power and authority over this world of mankind; He who will judge each

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of us according to his life, is Our Father. We are subject to a Father's laws, a Father's rule, a Father's judgment. Fatherhood is a closer, dearer, tenderer relation than that of lawgiver or governor or judge. It admits us to greater intimacy of approach. It assures us of love and sympathy and kindness and care and provision. It assures us that behind all authority and command there is the heart of the Eternal, which is most wonderfully kind.

As Jesus would have us bring these true conceptions of God into relation with the ruling conception of Fatherhood; as he would have us see the Father behind all divine law, government and judgment; assuredly he would have us banish from our thought all crude and harsh conceptions of God, which come from the days of men's ignorance and blindness, and are unworthy to be associated with the Name of Our Father.

Such crude conceptions survive in the Old Testament. People thought that a divine messenger must bring tidings or presage of disaster. Israel marvelled that Moses could speak face to face with Jehovah and live. The glow

that lingered upon his countenance, when he came down from the mount of communion with the Lord, was more than they could endure. Aye, even when the heavenly messenger came to the shepherds of Judea to tell of the birth of the Saviour, they were sore afraid and needed to be calmed by the reassuring words: "Fear not, for behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Why was this? Uneasy consciences, you say. Yes, doubtless conscience doth make cowards of us all. But more than that. There was still the crude conception of God as a Being to inspire terror by his very presence—not alone by his judgments, which indeed are terrible to the evil doer who persists in his sin—but by his very presence. The simple thought of the nearness of God made men afraid.

Jesus would banish all such thought from our minds. He would have the thought of God bring sweetness and gladness and peace to our hearts. He would have the thought of God the most soothing and joy inspiring and strength giving of all thoughts that can come to us. Just the thought of God himself, without definition

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or affirmation, he would have us hold as a source of joy and peace. So he would have us enshrine within us the thought of the divine Fatherhood. He would have each of us make of his own soul a holy place in which the divine Fatherhood is cherished and held sacred.

If we do this, there will be no place in us for thoughts of God which are not in harmony with his Fatherhood. All discordant sentiments and conceptions must flee before this one ruling truth. Only the thoughts and sentiments which are in accord with God as Christ reveals him will have a home in us. This is the real hallowing of Our Father's Name. You see, it is essentially a matter of the inner life. It is more than outward reverence. Outward reverence will certainly be born of it. It will make us reverent in speech and demeanor. But it will be deeper than these.

If we have this sentiment of reverence for the Heavenly Father, we shall have reverence for all that is akin to him. We shall have reverence for our own relation of sonship towards him. We shall have reverence for humanity, made in the image of God. And we shall rever-



ence truth. We shall put truth before tradition. We shall feel that we are always free to find and believe and affirm truth, whatever the result may be. We shall feel that our minds must ever be open to the truth, that to close our minds against truth is to dishonor the Father, and we will not dishonor him. Jesus honored his Father and bore witness to the truth. The children of God are entitled to the truth. If we really have the reverence for God that begets reverence for the truth, we shall never be willing to compromise the truth. We shall ever be seeking the truth, and as we find we shall follow.

This sentiment of reverence for God and truth and all good, which is akin to God, is an essential quality of character. Whoever is without it has a fatal lack. Pitiful indeed is the plight of the man or woman in whose heart there is no holy place where some one or some thing is revered. Truth, goodness, God,—if none of these is enshrined within the soul, that soul is miserably poor, however large its other possessions may be. Edward Gibbon, the historian, holds a secure place among men of letters. He

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was a man of large mental gifts and much learning, as learning was in his day. But Thomas Carlyle could say of Gibbon: "The man has no shrine." There are writers today of whom the same seems true. Gifted as they are in literary art, there is nothing that they deem holy. There are others, too, who are not writers, who seem the same. To them nothing is sacred, nothing is worthy of reverence. All spiritual values are in the melting pot. Duty, obligation, responsibility, truth, honor, loyalty, principle, conviction, faith—these are obsolete—words without meaning. In their place come impulse, fancy, mood, the chatter of the hour, or at best, self expression, or self realization.

Something is indeed to be said for self realization and self expression, if these are taken in their deeper sense, but as men and women are using them today and conjuring with them, they mean little more than self indulgence. Under the flippancy which dismisses all the finer things of the soul as outgrown vagaries no longer wanted in the objective life of the day, the soul itself is well nigh extinguished. If it could be, it would be. And character loses all sturdiness,

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all fineness, all nobility. Banish reverence, dismantle the inner temple, and you undermine character.

Let us come back to the Master of Life. Let us learn anew of Him who spoke from the depths of communion with the Highest. Whoever will sit at his feet and learn of him will gain what men are so much needing today, a deeper sense of the reality of divine things and an inner hallowing of the divine that will bring peace and strength to the soul.

## CHAPTER III

### THE COMING OF THE FATHER'S KINGDOM

“Thy Kingdom Come.”

**I**N THE teaching of Jesus, prayer has two characteristics which are directly opposite. It is at once strictly individual and broadly social.

The individuality of prayer is distinctly brought out in such teaching as this: “Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.” This makes prayer a secret exercise of the soul, alone with God. Isolation from the rest of mankind; exclusion of the world; this is Christ's explicit condition of true prayer. This is positive teaching, and its principle must stand as clearly the principle of Jesus. In the secret place, pray to thy Father, who is in secret. Primarily and vitally, then, prayer must be the individual enterprise of the individual soul. It will gain

its character from the direct approach of each soul to God. Under this conception, every one who would pray aright needs to cultivate the power of direct approach to the Most High; to realize that the Father is in secret and seeth in secret; to come into actual, personal touch with God.

On the other hand, Jesus makes prayer to be distinctly social. In the aloneness with God, where all is in the Father's sight, where all is said to the Father, where all is asked of the Father, where all is expected of the Father, prayer is to be as widely social as it is rigidly individual. There, in the secret presence of the Father, is the place for the broadest human sympathy, for the keenest realization of the needs of our fellow men, for the strongest sense of kinship with the whole of humanity. Pray to thy Father, but call him Our Father. And in that title realize the share which every one of our mankind possesses in the divine Fatherhood. Carry with you every human relationship. Realize yourself as one of the great family of God. Shut out nothing that belongs to human life. Make your prayer inclusive. In

the presence of God, gain a quickened sense of the wants of man. Largeness of heart, breadth of sympathy, a sense of others, are a necessity of Christian prayer.

“He prayeth best who loveth best  
All things both great and small;  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all.”

Distinctly this social quality in prayer is intended in the familiar petition, so often used and so often spoken upon: “Thy kingdom come.”

Just what people ask for when they offer this petition sincerely and thoughtfully will depend upon the conception each has of the meaning of the kingdom of God. For people have held variant views as to the meaning of the familiar phrase. Some have identified the kingdom of God with the Christian Church, as a visible, organic body. Some have thought of the kingdom chiefly as the glorified life of the world to come. Some have pictured it as a Christian State on the earth. The Jews of Christ's time and earlier, thought of it as the restored Jewish mon-

archy under the government of the Messiah. Today many Christian thinkers conceive of it as human society thoroughly Christianized, that is, the ideal society from a Christian standpoint. And with the general thought of the ideal society, people differ widely as to the form it will take.

Yet, amidst all this diversity of view as to the fashion of the kingdom of God, there is one dominant, creative idea. It is this: The fulfillment of the divine ideal for man. When God works out his purpose; when he has his way with the world; when humanity becomes what God intends, then the kingdom of God appears. Essentially then, the kingdom of God is God's ideal for us, rather than our ideal for ourselves. Our ideals differ; our conceptions of the kingdom of God differ, therefore, because we differ in our insight into the divine meanings. We strive to fashion our ideals after the divine ideal, and all our ideals are imperfectly fashioned, because we see only in part. The Jew conceived of the kingdom of God as the restored Jewish monarchy, because he felt so keenly the loss of independence, and was so wrapped up in the fortunes

of his own people throughout their tragic history that he seldom saw beyond. Enthusiastic churchmen have identified the kingdom of God with the visible church, because to them, the grace and power of God have been exerted on behalf of man solely through the organic body. Other men, noting the power and possibility that reside in human governments, have thought that these, if once linked with Christianity and made to serve its ends, would constitute the kingdom of God. Still others, seeing that governments represent only a fraction of social power and possibility, have conceived of society in a more comprehensive way and have built up ideals of social organization on Christian lines. Thus the conception has grown and broadened, and men have sought earnestly to discern and portray the divine ideal of life on earth, while other minds, despairing of this present world, have seen hope only in the rapture of heaven.

But always, and in all the variously fashioned conceptions, the thought has been present, that the kingdom of God is good for man. The kingdom always embodies the greatest human



benefit. It always secures human happiness. And so men have ever longed for it. God's kingdom should right the wrongs under which men have groaned. It should compensate for the sufferings men have borne. It should rid life of its evils. It is God coming to the relief of men. It is God intervening with his power and authority to put away the things that hurt, and to bring in the things that bless. There is great pathos in this persistent human longing for the kingdom of God. In this longing are brought to expression all the aspirations and soul strivings of men after better things, after fuller and freer life, after deeper satisfaction, after the consummation of their being.

And now Jesus sanctions this longing of men and bids us pray for the coming of God's kingdom. Consistently with the dominant thought of the prayer, he would have us think of the kingdom of God as the kingdom of Our Father. And so the kingdom comes to mean Our Father's ideal for us—for the world of mankind—what Our Father would have us be—what mankind would be, if Our Father had his way with us unhindered—what mankind will be

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when Our Father's intent is fulfilled. This is the kingdom of God for whose coming Jesus bids us pray.

In this kingdom, love reigns. So much we can say with certainty, without undertaking to fashion the ideal more precisely. The essential matter is always that the thought of Our Father for us shall have unhindered sway; that Our Father's ideal for our human family shall come to realization. And I take it to be the intent of the prayer that we shall not insist upon the particular conception of the divine ideal which we have reached in our own thought, but that we shall hold our minds open to God's disclosures; that we shall have such implicit trust in the wisdom and love of Our Heavenly Father that we shall seek rather the fulfillment of his purpose than the fulfillment of our own vision of what should be. And ever there will be this all pervasive conviction that the whole hope of our world rests upon the establishment of the reign of God.

It is clear then, that when Jesus bids us pray for the coming of Our Father's kingdom, he means to enlist our broadest sympathies on the

side of the aspirations and longings of men. He wants us to feel keenly the needs of the world. He wants to free us from the bondage to our own immediate desires. He wants to get us out of the narrowness of mere personal wishes and ambitions and needs and to link us with the upward movement of humanity. Because the kingdom of God is the symbol of all that is deepest and most persistent in human longing; because only in the kingdom of God are men to realize the purpose of their being; therefore Jesus would enlist our sympathy, our longing, our prayer, for its coming. Prayer for the coming of the kingdom of Our Father is prayer in its broadest social significance.

Furthermore, Jesus desires to enlist us on the side of his own work. A Christian must be in sympathy with Jesus. So far as we are Christian, our sympathies are with the Master in all that he is doing. Our sympathies are with him in the fulfillment of his life purpose and mission. We want what he wants. We aim at the object he aimed to accomplish. We align ourselves with him in all the effort and undertaking of his life. Now, Jesus is definitely committed

to the kingdom of God. His life purpose is to promote and reveal that kingdom; to reveal the kingdom in its principles and powers; to promote the kingdom by bringing its principles into practice and by releasing its powers in action. The work of Jesus Christ is an unfinished work. It is still in process. Only part of his work is finished. His earthly mission, delivering the message received from the Father for men; his life of humiliation; his example of perfect obedience to God, on earth; his sacrifice for sin upon the Cross; his victory over death, in resurrection; all these are finished. But in addition to these, or in co-operation with them, there is the continuous work to which he is committed—the work of bringing in the kingdom of God—of realizing the divine ideal for man.

All that he has done for us bears upon this end. All the truth he has taught; the spirit he has shown; the powers he has released; all are for this. And because this is the work that he has begun and is carrying forward, he would have our fellowship in it. He would have us as clearly and heartily committed to it as he is. He wants us with him in it. Jesus takes small

interest in our ecclesiastical details, our sectarian rivalries, our petty schemes, our religious trivialities, which so often obscure our vision of larger things. He would have us put these things in the small and subordinate place to which they belong. And then he would have us come with our deepest interest, our richest energies, our warmest sympathies and our most vital enthusiasm to the one great work of age-long and world-wide import—the bringing in of the kingdom of God. Whatever makes for that work he would have us foster and encourage; whatever does not count for that work he would have us put aside. And so he bids us pray: Thy Kingdom come.

Once more, Jesus would have us take a candid view of world conditions. This prayer implies, what the continuous work of Christ clearly proceeds upon—that the Kingdom of Our Father has not come. It is coming, continually coming, but it has not come in its fulness. It had not come when Jesus was upon the earth; it has not come yet. Jesus never permitted his followers to be blind to the facts of human life. In his devotion to truth, he taught them to see

things as they are. Everywhere his light shows things in their actual character. He teaches us to call good, good, and to call evil, evil; to call right, right, and to call wrong, wrong. He teaches us to see the kingdom of God wherever God is honored and obeyed and to see that the kingdom of God has not yet come wherever God is dishonored and disobeyed.

Jesus would not be content to have us sing with Browning's Pippa on her holiday: "God's in his heaven; All's well with the world." That is the mood of the Spring and the care free gayety of youth, which none of us would check or reprove. Let us be thankful for all innocent gayety and blitheness in a world of so much sadness. But as a clear eyed and thoughtful view of the world, we can not make Pippa's song our philosophy. Jesus did not. We have to see that all is not well with the world. We have to see that much is wrong, and that it is the sin and bitter selfishness of men that make this so. In Browning's poem, you remember, Pippa's song fell upon the ears of two people whose hands and souls were stained with deadly sin.

## THE COMING OF THE FATHER'S KINGDOM

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And ever when we look frankly upon the world as it is, we must see that with all that is good—and there is much—men are still far from realizing the Father's kingdom. So Jesus would have us pray, with intelligent grasp of the facts, with warmest sympathy with human need, with confession of our own shortcoming, and with passionate longing for the day: "Thy Kingdom Come."

One more thought. When Jesus bids us pray for the coming of the Father's kingdom, he conveys an assurance. The Kingdom of the Father will come. It is coming. It has been coming throughout the ages. We follow no forlorn hope when we pray and look and labor for the coming of the kingdom. We align ourselves with the divine movement which sweeps on to victory. World conditions look dark at times. Perhaps if we knew more facts, they would look still darker. Reactionary forces, whose strength we have not calculated, may triumph for a time. But the mightiest powers, the powers of truth, righteousness, love and peace, will come to their own.

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Not however by our sitting still and waiting. Rather by our entire consecration, our steadfast faith, our unwearying labors, and our most earnest prayer.



## CHAPTER IV

### HOW THE FATHER'S WILL IS TO BE DONE

“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

**I**N CONSIDERING the teachings of Jesus, we are always to remember that they are for all mankind. Jesus gives them and says: “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” He shuts out no one who is willing to enter the circle of his disciples. He says: “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” He makes no distinction of class or caste or measure of attainment. He has no secret teaching for a favored, select few. His message is for the public. If he gives it to chosen men whom he has trained and trusted, it is that these may give it to the world. All he asks is that the message be believed and obeyed. Any one who will may believe and obey it.

People felt this in Jesus from the first. They were drawn to him by it. His ignoring of all distinctions and his meeting people upon the common human plane drew about him people

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who were outside the influence of official teachers of religion. They felt that they could come to him freely, as they could not come to the official teachers. They felt that he spoke to them simply as men and women, with common human needs, frailties, sins, struggles and capacities.

This all inclusive breadth of intent in the teaching of Jesus is significant in connection with the prayer that he taught. The prayer is for everybody. It is not meant to be the prayer of a sect or a party or a class, or a people. It is the prayer of humanity. Wherever men are found, there Jesus would have them pray after this manner to the Father of all.

Now observe the significance of this fact for this one petition, which is in the very heart of the prayer: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." As in heaven, so in earth, is the Father's will to be done. Thus are we to pray. Jesus would make this the prayer of the world. It must be so, sooner or later, if it is to become a reality. For it is world wide in its scope. If the Father's will is to be done in earth as it is done in heaven, it must be done in all the earth and not only in a limited portion. And every-

where on earth people must be praying that this may be.

Whoever will ponder this petition so as to realize its meaning will see that it pictures the possibilities of human life in the most glowing colors. We have been taught to regard our humanity as sinful, as fallen. All along the pathway of history, there is sin. The men of the Bible are sinners. We know ourselves as sinners. And Jesus came to call sinners. Sin is a fact.

But sin is not the final fact. Within this humanity of ours, with its taint and stain of sin, there is something deeper than sin. There is the potency, the latent possibility, of the manhood that was in God's intent. There is the potency of the humanity which God saw when he made us after his own image and likeness; when he looked upon his creation and saw that it was all very good. Within every one of us there is latent a better self than has ever come to light. Within this humanity of ours there is a better humanity than has ever written its deeds upon the pages of the world's record. In the course of human life through the years and

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centuries, the baser possibilities have often come to fulfillment. The nobler ones have often been thrust into the background or have gleamed forth only occasionally, instead of shining ever with strong and steady ray and giving color to the whole of life.

It is the aim and the work of Jesus to release the nobler powers, to bring to realization the nobler possibilities, to fulfill in us the divine intent. And so while he never belittles or denies the facts of sin, while he frankly comes to call sinners to himself, he ever seeks to turn our thought away from sin to the higher possibilities. It is as though he said to every one of us: "Forget the sinner you are and contemplate the saint you may be. I am here to release the child of God that is captive within you and to bring him out to his divine inheritance."

Jesus would have us emphasize the good that awaits development within us. He would have us bring to the fore the better self that is truly in each of us—the self that God made. And because of the latent humanity that is after the image and likeness of God—the nobler self that longs for freedom—the self that is God's true

child—Jesus puts before us in the prayer he bids us offer the life in which that latent humanity shall come to expression. This is the life in which the will of Our Father is done in earth as it is done in heaven. In that life the child of God in us comes to his own.

Now, let me say, you and I ought to become better acquainted with that better self, the child of God in us. We are well acquainted with the frail, faulty, fitful, failing, fearful self. We are so well acquainted with this self that we are often well nigh strangers to the other, nobler self. But it is the other, nobler self that we need to know best. And the more we know this nobler self, the less will the baser self thrust its presence upon us. The strong, pure, courageous self, which mirrors forth the will of God, will come into conscious control and the baser self will become powerless and shrink back. This is what Jesus is aiming to bring to pass when he sets before us this picture of life on earth in which God's will is done as it is done in heaven.

It will perhaps be said that this is an ideal picture and shows not a real humanity, but an ideal humanity. Granted that, compared with

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human life as we know it, the picture is ideal. But the ideal is creative, as are all the ideals of Jesus. This ideal is not only to be seen, but is to be made a part of ourselves and to be steadily realized through its power over our inner life. I take it that the winsome quality in the message of Jesus has ever been its ideal quality. He has held up before men and women not what they are, but what they may be.

The mere realizing of sin makes no one better; helps no one to a new life. Useful as it may be to awaken, it has no power to impel to holiness. A mere sense of sin will leave a man in his sins. The prodigal in his rags and hunger remains in his rags and hunger so long as he sees only his rags and feels only his hunger. When he thinks of the Father and the Father's house and the place he has forfeited in that house; when he thinks of what he might have been and had; when he thinks of himself as he should be, then he resolves to return. It is always the thought of the good that might be ours, of the good that we might be and do, that moves us to a higher life. So in giving us this thought of doing Our Father's will in earth as it is done

in heaven, and in bidding us keep this thought before us in our prayers, Jesus has given us an ideal of true creative power. He has sought to enlist our imaginations as active powers on behalf of the transformation of life.

Now let us look at the picture more closely, as Jesus presents it to us. Just what is this creative ideal which he would have us cherish? As in heaven, so in earth. Jesus would extend the frontier of heaven so as to include the earth. He would expand the area of heavenly life so as to encompass life here. He would have us pattern our life after the life of heaven. Put it in any of these ways, the idea is practically the same—that our human life here is to undergo a transformation which shall give it heavenly character. But what do we know about heaven? Is it not outside our experiences as we walk the ways of earth? These questions naturally arise. Some definite replies may be made.

First, it may be said that Jesus himself speaks of heaven as a reality. He is entirely at home in the thought of heaven. He tells of the angels in heaven who joy over the repentance of a sinner. He bids us call God our Father in

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Heaven. And he says that he came down from heaven, not to do his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him.

Jesus speaks as one who knows. He speaks of heaven as one might speak of his home. He does this without describing or locating, as though description or location were unnecessary. Now when we follow him so far, and recognize that there is a realm of reality in which God dwells and God's will is done, and in which Jesus is at home, we may picture the life in that realm in some of its leading features:

To begin with, we may say that the heavenly life is filled with the radiant presence of God. There God is clearly manifested, without question or doubt. All clouds and darkness are dispelled. His presence is realized, vividly, positively, powerfully. His radiant presence is the supreme reality.

We may say, too, that the life of heaven is the life in which love reigns. The whole atmosphere of the heavenly realm is the atmosphere of love. Any thing that is unloving is unknown there. It has no place in the heavenly life. All the unloving, and therefore, unlovely, things



that mar the life on earth as we know it, simply do not appear in the life of heaven. Love is so strong, so pervasive, so controlling, that the unlovely things can not come to being. God is love, according to his word given to us here, and we seek to grasp the truth by faith; but in the life in which God's radiant presence is ever felt, this truth is known as a present reality vividly and constantly experienced. God's love permeates the atmosphere of heaven as the June sunshine permeates our air. In the glow of that radiant love all life is filled with love.

We may say, further, that the life of heaven is filled with joy. "In thy presence is fulness of joy," says the Psalmist. Even in Old Testament times, some minds had seen this truth. The presence of God, radiant with love, is a joy giving presence. And where that presence is vividly manifest, warming all life with its glow, flooding all life with its light, gilding all life with its glory, all life is made joyous.

If we thus conceive the heavenly life, we can gain some idea of the doing of God's will in heaven. We can see that all these features of the heavenly life will be reflected in the obedience

that is given to the Heavenly Father. God's will will be done as in his very presence. Not as the will of one who issues distant commands, but as the will of one who is close at hand, touching life with his life, radiating power, energy, vigor, vitality, giving every one to feel the inflow from his own exhaustless being. Doing God's will with a strength unflinching, with a strength constantly renewed from the very fountain of life—this is the heavenly obedience.

Then, also, in the heavenly life, God's will is done ever lovingly. As love is the atmosphere of heaven, so is it the moving power of all obedience. God's will is never truly done if it is not done lovingly. For love is the inner principle of the will of God. Unloving obedience is unknown in heaven. Doing things as hard, unwelcome duty is unknown there. Doing things from fear of the consequences of not doing them is unknown there. Perfect love casteth out fear. Love obeys promptly, fully, and without calculation or stint. Such is the obedience of heaven.

Once more, as the life of heaven is filled with joy, God's will is done there in the same spirit. The joyous life ensures joyous obedience.

Somewhat like this may we conceive the life that Jesus would have us seek and gain here on earth. The ideal for the world of mankind, as it is, he would have all his followers seek to realize it in themselves, while they pray for its realization everywhere upon earth. He would have us do the Heavenly Father's will with a vivid sense of the Father's presence, as the never failing source of life and power; with a love that is born of God's own love and that counts nothing too much to do for him; with a joyousness that abounds and is ever renewed.

So Jesus would have us live and obey. So he did the will of God. He has shown us the way. He has taught us in himself how the will of God is done in heaven. He has brought the heaven spirit down to earth. He has shown us the constant realization of the Father's presence, the love that refuses nothing the Father wills, and the joy which the world can not take away.

He has shown us the way. Shall we not take it?

## CHAPTER V

### THE DAILY BREAD

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

**F**ROM the divine to the human. From the heaven high vision of God and the world wide vision of the purpose of God to the sense of the common man and his daily hunger. This is the order of prayer in the teaching of Jesus. First our view is lifted to the hallowing of the heavenly Father's name, the coming of the heavenly Father's kingdom, and the doing of the heavenly Father's will; then our minds are turned to the commonest of men's daily needs. First, the Heavenly Father in his holiness and sovereignty and righteous love—then the human family in their want and sin and exposure to evil.

This order is significant. It witnesses to the effect in experience of realizing the presence of God. Prayer brings us with conscious purpose into the realized presence of God. I say, the realized presence, because we always have the

presence of God as an objective fact. We have it whether we think of God or not. We have it wherever we are and whatever we are doing.

“Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?  
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?  
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there;  
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou  
art there;  
If I take the wings of the morning,  
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the  
sea;  
Even there shall thy hand lead me,  
And thy right hand shall hold me.”

True as this is, it may be true without our realizing it or wishing to realize it. But in prayer that is a genuine exercise of the soul we seize upon the fact of God's presence. We speak to him and he hears. There is close personal contact—contact desired and sought—between the human spirit and the Divine Spirit. When we pray aright we wish God to be near. We wish him to hear. We have no desire to flee from his presence. Our desire is to be in his presence.

And when God's presence is realized, and so far as it is realized, the first normal effect of the realization is that God's presence overshadows, or better, *outshines*, every other presence. God fills the horizon of the soul. Then, with his mighty personality outshining all else, his Name, his Kingdom, his Will must take the foremost place. This must be, not by virtue of any law or command, but by the native, instinctive response of the soul to the Presence of the Highest. In that supreme Presence, and with the great divine interests looming before us in their majesty, our own personal interests seem small and unworthy of mention. Our desires and ambitions for ourselves take on a littleness far below the importance they have assumed before we viewed them in the light of the vision of God. Can we, dare we, speak of them in the holy presence of the Eternal?

Jesus says Yes. It is right. It is His Will—the Father's Will, that every smallest need and interest of ours shall be brought before his throne. Here is the breadth and the comprehensiveness of prayer. Its range is as wide as human vision and faith and feeling. Nothing

human is excluded from it. Life in all its variety of experience can be bound about the throne of God by the strong cords of prayer. So Jesus brings us by an easy and normal passage from the contemplation of the Name and Kingdom and Will of the Heavenly Father to the sense and consideration of the commonest need of the human family—the need of daily bread.

The transition from the contemplation of the divine to the consideration of the human is easy and normal for just this reason: human interests are divine interests. God's kingdom and God's will as we may know them are vitally concerned with human needs. In proportion as God's kingdom comes and God's will is done in earth as it is in heaven, human needs will be met, the deepest wants of the human soul will be satisfied and the commonest wants of the human body will be supplied; men will be blessed in soul and body. Holiness and health will be the common lot. It is entirely in keeping with the thought of God as Jesus reveals him, therefore, to follow the petition, "Thy will be done," with the request: "Give us this day our daily bread." There is an intimate connection

between the two. It is in the Father's will and it belongs to the Father's kingdom that we should be given our daily bread.

The daily bread represents all material wants. It is the first, fundamental and universal need of the bodily life, and so is representative of all. Material need has been the urgent force that has moved men to advance in civilization. Progress from barbarism has ever been marked by the emergence of new material needs and by the acquisition of new means or new methods of supplying them. To some minds material need has been the only force that has made for progress. Progress meant a better food supply, better shelter, better clothing, more comfort, more convenience, more control of natural forces and resources. This gives us what is called the economic interpretation of history, that is, the explanation of the whole life story of man by his efforts to secure material goods.

But this is one sided. Other influences than the pressure of material need have been active in human progress from the earliest known



times. Two, in particular, there have been: Religion and Art.

No life story of a people is complete without an account of its religion. Go back as far as you will in the records that are left to us, the memorials of religion are there. The memorials of religion are everywhere present and they are in the foreground. Religion was a shaping influence. Crude and savage it might be, but it was never absent.

So with art. Men gave expression to the creative impulses of art before they began to build houses. On the walls of the caves in which they made their homes, they made pictures, often with close accuracy and fine spirit. The creative spirit was astir within them along with the reaching forth after communion with higher powers.

Religion and art minister to needs that are not material. They minister to needs of the spirit that cannot rest in mere material satisfaction. As long as religion and art remain to bear witness to needs other than material, by which human progress has been motivated and

shaped, no merely economic interpretation of the human life story will suffice.

But while the higher, spiritual elements have always been present and are a vital part of human progress, the material have their place. While economic pressure will not wholly explain civilization, economic conditions have always been a matter of urgent concern to humanity. They are the conditions of every day life. They are the conditions in which our very upreach after God and beauty comes to expression in religion and art. And the clear indication of the teaching of Jesus is that God's kingdom and God's will are intimately concerned with just these conditions. God takes note of the surroundings in which we pass our daily life. He takes note of the common needs by which our life is affected. God's kingdom has to do with our entire personality.

Jesus himself submitted to the economic conditions of his time. Before he began his public ministry he was a part of the industrial life of Galilee. He won his daily bread by his toil in Joseph's shop. We can think of him as making tables and benches, and fashioning timbers for

houses. And we may be sure that he did his work well. We may be sure that if he made a table or a bench, every part was made right and fitted right, and that the finished product was thoroughly good. His work was honest work.

Moreover, when he left the shop and went out into the broad fields of public work, giving men the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, he still subjected himself to the economic conditions of the land and the time. When he was tempted to seek to demonstrate his divine sonship by commanding the desert stones to be made bread, he refused. He would have his Father provide for him in his own way. Always for himself and his immediate disciples he made this simple and direct connection. The Father in heaven knew their needs and would supply them, and their hearts could be at rest.

This simple connection is for us all to make. Its assurance belongs to all of God's children. Ultimately it should underlie all our thought of daily needs. But when we come to consider ways and means by which the good will of our Father is to be fulfilled in our actual experience, we find ourselves confronted by an economic process

which is far from simple. The daily bread comes to us by way of a complex system of production, transportation, distribution and exchange. The land, the rain, the sunshine, and the life processes in Nature are God's gifts; then human labor and human contrivance enter and take hold, and complexity results.

At every step in the process we depend upon our fellow men. Each must do his part. If there is failure at any point, the machinery of production and distribution is halted or breaks down and we fail to receive our supply. We forget or ignore this when all runs smoothly, but when the break in the process comes, we are forced to realize it. If the farmer is obliged to reduce acreage of production because labor is scarce; if the miner refuses to dig the coal to feed the fires in the mill; if the mill hands walk out; if the railway men tie up the roads by a wide spread strike; if anywhere along the line between the soil and the store the process is halted, you and I feel it. That is our economic system.

Moreover, even if the process be not halted and the product is ready to be delivered to us

in return for an equivalent, what if we have no equivalent to offer? Then, with all its smoothness of working down to us, the system still fails to supply us. So we are concerned not only to have the system of production and distribution work smoothly, but also to have our part in it, so that in some way we shall be able to offer the equivalent of the product which we need to satisfy our own wants. All this, I am sure, must be so evident as to need only to be said to be recognized as true.

Now what is the connection of all this with the kingdom and will of God? The prayer for the daily bread must mean that the product which in this complex way is brought to us shall become ours for use; that it shall be within reach and we shall be able to secure it. Yet it can not be confined to your individual need or mine. It is *our* daily bread that we ask God to give, and this means others as well as ourselves. In its complete application it means the whole human family. It means right economic conditions for all mankind. It brings the whole economic situation of the world to God's throne in prayer. It seeks for the world an economic

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life in which the will of God is done—in which men live and labor as God would have them.

This must be a life in which no one is wronged, no one suffers and the divine Fatherhood is ever recognized. It means an economic order in which all of God's children are supplied with the things that are needful; in which the human spirit is free from bondage to material necessities. It does not mean emancipation from work indeed, but it means emancipation from worry. It means work in the spirit of creative fellowship and happy trust in God.

It is a fact of common observation that there exists today a widespread dissatisfaction with our economic order. This dissatisfaction pervades the world. Many would change the order by giving it a new form, by radical modification of property rights and industrial management. Russia has undertaken this on a nationwide scale and the world is watching the experiment. Now, we must admit that no particular economic form possesses eternal sacredness. Changes of form are not necessarily immoral. Economic forms are expedients for the attainment of an end. But when we come to look at the matter

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from the standpoint of the kingdom of God, we must see that no mere form will meet the need. A new order introduced and maintained by force would leave us ultimately no better off than we are now.

What is needed is primarily a new spirit in our economic life. This may or may not bring in new forms or new relations. If the old forms and relations prove flexible enough to give full expression to the new spirit, they may be kept; if not, they may be cast off and new forms created. If the capitalistic control of industry and the wage system are capable of giving full play to the new spirit and the general welfare shall be best promoted by them, new forms will not be needed; but if these prove incapable of expressing fully the new spirit, more serviceable forms must be found.

The important matter is that the economic life shall embody God's will for the whole human family. This means that our economic life shall be so fashioned and conducted that we can take our part in it without protest, without grievance, with clear consciences, with a sense of human fellowship, with a sense of real partic-

ipation in the kingdom of God, and with a sense of truly doing God's will in earth as it is done in heaven. This new life is to come in, in place of the friction, the jarring, the bitterness, the selfishness, the morbid class consciousness, which some men foster and most men feel. Broad human consciousness is to take the place of class consciousness, and instead of narrow nationalism, there must be a broad internationalism that makes for human good.

So the prayer for daily bread needs to be not only a prayer that each of us may have for himself the satisfaction of his wants, but far more than this—a prayer for guidance that we may see the way out of present conditions; for strength of soul to take the way God shows us; for the Spirit of Christ to fill our hearts and the hearts of others, that we may take the Master's way with one another in economic enterprises. Such a prayer will have a great breadth of sympathy, a large sense of responsibility, and an appreciation of the greatness of the task in which, as Christ's followers, we share. It will be a prayer of world wide import, worthy to



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take its place along with our prayers for the coming of the Heavenly Father's kingdom and the doing of his will in earth as it is done in heaven.

## CHAPTER VI

### FORGIVENESS HUMAN AND DIVINE

“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”

**W**E ARE familiar with the truth that the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples is meant for the whole human family. In a prayer of such broad intent, we may expect that only the common human needs will come to expression. And this is the case. Needs which arise from local or temporary conditions or from individual or group experiences are left to find individual or group expression, as occasion may arise. It is noteworthy, for example, that this prayer bears no trace of sympathy with one social class rather than another, or of the influence of the Jewish nationalistic hopes upon the religious consciousness.

The expression of individual or group needs is indeed not forbidden or discouraged. It is simply left out of the common human prayer.

As long as there is freedom, there will be individuality in religion, and nowhere will freedom and individuality find greater scope than before God's throne of grace. Jesus guarantees this when he urges us to ask, seek and knock, without specifying what we shall ask or what we shall seek or into what experience we shall endeavor to gain admittance. Anywhere within the range of God's providence and grace we may ask, seek and knock.

But while Jesus guarantees freedom to our individuality, in this way, when he comes to deal with the common human needs, he specifies. First he names the daily bread, and then he names forgiveness, as a need as common to men as is the daily bread. In so many words, he bids us come before the Father in heaven with the petition: "Forgive us."

In thus teaching us, Jesus not only recognizes a common human need, but sanctions a common human impulse. For it is a common human impulse to seek forgiveness. The whole religious history of man shows this. It is a pathetic story that records the age long efforts of men to avert the anger of their gods and to secure their

pardon. From time immemorial men have made such efforts and they are doing so yet. According to their light or their darkness they have chosen their methods. By ritual, sacrifice, self denial, self humiliation, self torture, gifts, labors, fastings, the mediation of priests, penitential discipline, or giving up life itself, they have tried to gain forgiveness. Jesus found all this when he came. The need of forgiveness and the impulse to seek it in varied ways was no new revelation of his day. It was a common possession of human consciousness.

Jesus sanctions the impulse as he recognizes the need. He sanctions the impulse, but not all the vagaries of religious conduct which have sprung from it. He sheds his light upon this as he does upon all the life of man. He shows the way which men have sought by such devious paths. He tells us to pray: "Forgive us."

Forgive us—what? Jesus says, Forgive us our debts. Debts is the characteristic word. It is Christ's term for sins, just here. It is not indeed his only term for sins, but it is the one he has distinctly chosen to put into this prayer he has taught us; it is the term he has chosen

wherewith to point out the common need of forgiveness. There is a clear note of originality in this. So we shall do well to get the full import of the term as applied to sins.

Sin is not a pleasant subject to contemplate, and in some circles it is bad form to introduce it—that is it is bad form to introduce it as a subject of discourse, albeit it may be well established in those same circles as a fact of experience. The fact is, a self respecting person dislikes to think of himself as really and actually a sinner. One may accept the proposition as a Bible teaching—as a theological postulate—without vigorous opposition; but when it comes to applying the proposition to oneself as a fact to be faced—as a concrete, dismal fact, one recoils from it. How hard we labor to excuse ourselves in any concrete case of transgression! How we labor to convince ourselves, and if occasion arise, how we labor to convince others, that we were not in the wrong—that the thing we said or did was not wrong—that our motive was good, that we meant no harm, that we were misunderstood, that we could not help doing as we did, that we took the best course in the

circumstances—that somehow or other we were not to blame!

There is something within us which makes us want to assert and maintain our integrity. We recoil from the thought of ourselves as sinners. However much our theology may require us to avow our depravity, we are violently averse to acknowledging any evidence of it in definite mis-doing. It is one of the contradictions of our human nature that along with the persistent seeking of forgiveness which has marked the whole course of religion there has been this marked repugnance to regarding ourselves as sinners in any concrete and explicit way. But Jesus brings us face to face with the facts when he bids us pray: “Forgive us our debts.” For Jesus always deals with realities.

Now let us look at the Master’s word, *debts*, as applied to sins. Debt is a commercial term. It has a definite meaning in common business speech. And Jesus uses business speech—the speech of the market place—in much of his teaching. He uses this, in place of technical religious language, to bring his truth close to the minds of the people. Debt as a business

term means something owed. Our English word, *debt*, comes directly from a Latin word meaning owe. And our word, *ought*, comes from our word, *owe*. What I ought is what I owed or what I owe. Ought is owe. And debt is owed. In other words, debt is unfulfilled obligation.

Now lift the word into the moral sphere. Or, if you choose, expand its realm so that it coincides with the moral sphere. The commercial will be included, for certainly we can not afford to put morality in a department of life which business may not enter, and certainly we can not afford to put business in a department of life which morals may not enter. The moral sphere includes, or ought to include, the commercial; but it is larger. There are matters of morals which are not matters of business, albeit there should be no matters of business which are not also matters of morals.

Now expand your conception of debt to coincide with all of moral obligation. Then you get our Lord's meaning. Debt is the unfulfilled moral obligation. It is unfulfilled moral obligation of every kind. Now, is not this a large enough conception to include all that we mean

when we speak of sin? Jesus certainly makes it so. And when we reflect, we shall see that everything that can truly be called sin is a failure to fulfill some moral obligation. Every wrong is a denied right. Every wrong is a failure or a refusal or a neglect, to respect or give or maintain a right.

So Jesus regards sin not simply as the breaking of a law, or the disobeying of a command, but as something deeper. He regards sin as the withholding of a right; as the failure to render the thing that is owed. Transgression of God's law is sin because we owe God our obedience. Injury to a fellow man is sin because we owe him the recognition of his rights. That is, Jesus looks at sin from the standpoint of obligation rather than that of simple command. It has to do with our relation to our Father in heaven and our relation to our brother men on the earth, and not merely to government and law, human or divine.

Now, with this conception of sin, what shall we say of ourselves? Shall we need to find distinct flaws in our integrity, distinct stains upon our purity of purpose and deed, distinct acts of



wrong, in order to see ourselves in need of forgiveness? What if the day has gone by with no outburst of passion, with no swerving from truth, with no dishonest or unrighteous act; is there no unfulfilled obligation to God or man? Can we say that we owe nothing to him who loves us with everlasting love, who gives us all things, who holds us in life and calls us his children? Have we paid him? Have we earned what we get from him? Even though we have been thankful and have sought to be obedient, aye, consecrated to his service, do we owe him nothing now? Nay, still there is debt, debt unmeasured.

What shall we say about this indebtedness? In business we expect debts to be paid. If they are not paid, business suffers. Debits are permitted because of the expectation that in time they will be balanced by credits. What about debits and credits in our relations with God? From our Lord's teaching I gather that our relations with God are not to be put on the commercial plane. Jesus uses the commercial term to bring the obligation into sharp outline, but he couples it with a word which represents a

different procedure from the one usually taken in business.

In business debts are to be paid. If they are not paid voluntarily, measures are taken to collect them. But with God, debts are to be forgiven. Our relations with God are on another plane than that of business, in which you give so much for so much, *quid pro quo*, so much commodity, so much service, for so much money, to be given again for so much commodity or so much service. Our relation to God is that of children to the Heavenly Father; and the Heavenly Father gives and forgives.

Now what is forgiveness? This too must be seen in the light of God's Fatherhood. And if we view it in this light, we must see that it is not just the same thing as the pardoning of a criminal by executive clemency, which is one of the ways in which it has frequently been represented. It is noteworthy that with all our Lord's freedom and boldness of illustration, he never uses the illustration of the pardoned criminal to teach the forgiveness of sin. The pardon of a criminal means simply release from the penalty affixed to the violation of law. But God's for-

giveness is something higher than freeing us from the penalty of sin.

God's forgiveness is keeping us in fellowship with him as his children, notwithstanding our sins—our unfulfilled obligations. When we ask for forgiveness, as Jesus teaches us to do, what we seek and what God is willing to give is just this:—that despite our failures to render the Heavenly Father what we owe him, we shall not be treated as debtors, under an ever growing burden which we shall never be able to cast off; but we shall be and shall continue to be God's loved children, close to his heart, happy in his fellowship and secure in his care; and that God will ever continue to deal with us, not on the principle of debt and payment, but on the principle of grace and freedom.

So far we have dealt with divine forgiveness, which we need and seek. Now we come to the human correlate. "As we forgive our debtors." Jesus says, Ask God to forgive you as you forgive others. Continue to understand debtors in the moral sense rather than the business sense. Collect from your business debtors and forgive your moral debtors, but forgive them as you

ask God to forgive you. If any one has failed in his moral obligation to you; if he has failed in any way to do what was right by you; forgive him and make that forgiveness the plea that you present to God when you ask him to forgive you.

Sounds hard, does it not? But clearly this is the Master's teaching. He does not say that we are to use any plea of weakness, or of regret, or of attitude of any kind towards our own sins. He does not bid us say, "Forgive us because we are sorry; forgive us because we promise not to do it again; forgive us because we are weak and sinful and yield so readily; forgive us because we were led astray; forgive us because we repent." He bids us present just this one plea: "Forgive us, as we forgive." This looks as though human forgiveness were the measure and the condition of divine forgiveness.

Clearly Jesus has a reason for putting the matter of forgiveness before us in this way. There must be a vital principle in his method. Here is the truth: Jesus wishes to release a power which dwells in us, which is able to transform relations between men. There resides in us a power of forgiveness which if it is allowed

to come to expression will obliterate the discord of the world and bind the human family together in happy fellowship. This power is the gift of God. It is kept down by fear and distrust. Instead of its manifestations there constantly appears the spirit of revenge and hatred and continued strife. Every one asserts his rights, and cherishes his grievances and grudges, and magnifies his wrongs.

Because the power of forgiveness is suppressed, the individual consciousness and the group consciousness and the national consciousness and the world consciousness are poisoned, progress is stayed, and the tale of human suffering grows each day. But though suppressed, the power of forgiveness persists. Below all the unhappy human relations, it still is latent and needs only to be released to bring peace where now there is strife, to awaken love where now there is hatred, to bring men to clasp hands as friends where now they stand apart as foes.

The power is in us by the gift of God and Jesus seeks to call it into exercise. The power of human forgiveness is a reflection and a

witness of the power of divine forgiveness. Because it is in us we know that it is in God. Because God has given it to us, we know that he has it in himself. We know that when we listen to the voice of God within us we are prompted to forgiveness rather than revenge. And the more we yield to that divine voice and forgive fully and freely, the more we can believe in the full and free forgiveness of God. And the less we yield to the divine voice and so withhold our forgiveness from others, the less do we really believe and claim the forgiveness of God.

Jesus would have us overcome our fear of forgiving others. He would have us forego all revenges. He would have us cleanse our hearts of all desire of revenge and all ill will. He would have us give full play to the divine impulse of forgiveness. He would have us practice this and teach it to the world in matters small and great. He would have us practice and teach it in all human relations. He would assure us that the practice of forgiveness is safe; that it makes everywhere for human well being; that it is an essential part of the kingdom of God on earth.

## FORGIVENESS HUMAN AND DIVINE

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And he would assure us that by this practice we shall come into true and ever growing fellowship with our Father who is in Heaven.

## CHAPTER VII

### TEMPTATION AND DELIVERANCE

“Lead Us not Into Temptation; but Deliver Us from Evil”

**WE** HAVE reached the last petition of the Lord’s Prayer. As we have considered the earlier petitions, we have found that each has its own contribution to make to our understanding of prayer, as Jesus presents it. Each petition illumines our common relationship to God, the Heavenly Father, or brings to expression a need which we all share. Each petition, therefore, is calculated to strengthen our sense of common relationship and common need, and so to bind us in fellowship before our Father’s throne.

This sense of relationship and fellowship of need with one another are to abide with us. They are possessions of the soul to be held constantly. But the expression of this relationship and these common needs in the form of prayer is a matter of occasions. While we may have and should have the spirit of prayer as a con-



tinuous experience, the actual practice of prayer belongs to certain times. Frequent times these should be, but still they are definite hours or days. However rapt we may be in our devotions, they cannot always occupy us. The time comes when we must leave the throne of grace and go forth to engage in the common pursuits of life. We must mingle with our fellows and join in their activities, and face the world as it is. In view of this fact, we can see the significance of making this the concluding petition of the Prayer: "And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil."

Temptation is a common fact of everyday life. It comes from many sources and has many channels of approach. No one is exempt from it. Jesus himself was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Temptation is not sin. It is a testing of us to see whether we will sin. It is an attempt upon our moral firmness to make us sin, if this may be. It is an attack, but not necessarily conquest. It is an assault, but not necessarily a capture. It is the presentation of opportunity, but not necessarily our availing of the opportunity. In-

deed it is our opportunity for victory or defeat. It is our opportunity to stand or fall.

Temptation has no limits of time or place. It may come in the crowd, but it is not confined to the crowd. It may come in the group, but it is not confined to the group. It may come in the thick of life's activities, where human contacts multiply and the influence of other personalities bears hard upon us; but it may come as well in the solitude, when we are left without any companionship other than our own thoughts. It may come to us in our homes, at our daily tasks, aye, in the very house of God. There is no such thing as immunity from temptation through the circumstances of time, place, or outward condition. Certain forms of temptation may be precluded by circumstances of time and place, but others will come.

Temptation is as varied as sin. As there are many forms of sin, so are there many forms of temptation. The fact that we are not tempted in some directions does not mean that we are not tempted at all. The form of our temptations will vary according to our spiritual development or our physical constitution or con-

dition or our stage of maturity. It will vary according to our ambitions and affections; according to our sensitiveness to one appeal or another; according to our training or temperament; according to all the experiences that have left their imprint upon us; according to the whole content of the life within us.

Temptation came to Jesus through his highest and holiest consciousness—his consciousness of divine Sonship. In all the glow and gladness and glory of that wondrous consciousness, awakened or reinforced and confirmed at his Baptism, the suggestion came to him to give that consciousness unworthy expression. He was tempted to show himself the Son of God in ways not ordered by the Father. He had conquered all baser forms of temptation. He had passed through the days of childhood and boyhood and adolescence and dawning manhood with unsullied soul. He was master of himself—master of his body and his mind. He had come unscathed through the fires which we all must pass through on the way to maturity. Then temptation met him in a form so subtle that it seems to us almost imaginary, yet to him it was

so real as to bring upon him a veritable conflict of soul—a deadly combat with the powers of evil.

So, to many a one who has conquered temptation to the baser and more repulsive sins, so that they no longer have any appeal to him, temptation comes in more subtle and insidious forms and has all the reality of an attack upon his integrity of soul.

We can be tempted through anything. The channel of temptation is our desire. In whatever direction our desires go out, in that direction are we open to temptation. If one desires money, he can be tempted through money. If he desires popularity, he can be tempted through popularity. If he desires prominence, he can be tempted through prominence. If he desires position, he can be tempted through position. If he desires power, he can be tempted through power. If he desires pleasure, he can be tempted through pleasure. And so on throughout the long catalogue of human desires. Whatever one desires constitutes an avenue of approach for temptation. Shrewd and unscrupulous men

know this and act upon it in their efforts to use other men for their purposes.

Let us understand, however, that desire may be either right or wrong in itself. Yet even a desire that is right in itself, a desire for a thing that is innocent, may become the occasion of temptation. There may be a temptation to gratify in a wrong way the desire for the thing that is innocent in itself. Some of the strongest and most subtle temptations are of this character. The thing we want is right. In itself it is not forbidden. It is not harmful. It is one of the goods of life. But the means proposed to secure the good thing is a forbidden means. To gratify desire in the way suggested would be wrong, though the thing desired is not wrong. The temptation to such gratification comes all along the ways of life. All normal desires may be made the channels of temptation.

As to a wrong desire, that is, the desire of a thing that is wrong in itself, it is obvious that the appeal to such a desire is a distinct temptation to wrong doing. Right desires gratified in a way that is contrary to God's will, and wrong

desires gratified instead of suppressed, are both to be regarded as yieldings to temptation.

But Jesus teaches us to say to God: "Lead us not into temptation." This awakens the question, What part has God in our temptations? Why ask him not to lead us into them? This is a question over which many minds have puzzled, when they have come to this petition of the Lord's Prayer.

Certainly it must be said that God tempts no man. So the New Testament clearly teaches. While God may subject us to testing by the circumstances of life, he never tempts any one, in the sense of endeavoring to induce him to sin. Such a thought is utterly abhorrent to the character of God. It is utterly incompatible with his holiness.

What part then has God in our temptation? Temptation arises from circumstances. God orders life. Under his Providence we are where we are. Granted that we are in some degree responsible for being where we are. We have chosen, as the opportunity of choosing has come to us. Perhaps by our wisdom, perhaps by our unwisdom, we have made the choice. Perhaps

by our energy and enterprise, perhaps by our lack of these; perhaps by our grasping, perhaps by our neglecting or refusing to grasp the opportunity that has knocked at our door; perhaps because we have been clear sighted, perhaps because we have been blind, we have taken or missed the tide that leads on to fortune. In either case, whatever our measure of credit or discredit, God has kept his hold on our life.

All the varied circumstances which are ours under God's sovereignty may be avenues of temptation. Prosperity has its temptation. Success may tempt. To be selfish in prosperity; to be proud; to be contemptuous of those who have not prospered; to be unsympathetic; to consider that we are superior because we have prospered—how easy all this is and how readily men are tempted to it! To worship success; to confound success with merit; to condone wrong doing in the successful; to look down on those whom we judge to have failed; all this too is easy and in this direction temptation enters again and again.

On the other hand, adversity has its own temptations, equally frequent and powerful

with those of prosperity. To be rebellious; to be embittered; to be envious; to belittle those who prosper; to be over-sensitive; to imagine ourselves injured—all these are the possibilities of adversity, and along all these lines temptation comes. So it is that every position and relation and condition in life has its own temptations.

And now, because temptation comes through all these channels, Jesus teaches us to make appeal to God that the things he orders for us may not prove the occasion of our moral downfall. “Lead us not into temptation” means then: “Let not the gifts Thou hast bestowed upon us or the circumstances of life as Thou hast permitted them, be to us occasions of sin.”

As a personal prayer, this implies a certain humility and self distrust. It is the opposite of presumption, of boasting, of carelessness, of moral self sufficiency. It is the opposite of the attitude which says, “Life has no snares for me. I can go forth and be sure that I shall not fall. I have no fear of sin. I will take the risk. My character is secure.” It is rather the attitude which says: “I know that everywhere tempta-



tion may assail me. I pray God that nothing he sends to me and no place he assigns me may be used by the tempter to draw me into sin." This is a recognition of the fact of moral attack and the summoning of divine aid to sustain us under it.

But this prayer is more than personal. Like the other petitions the Master taught, it is social, and so is sympathetic. It includes in its intent all who may be subject to temptation. Temptation is the common lot. We see the faults of others; let us also realize that they are tempted. With this realization, the prayer against temptation includes our fellows as well as ourselves. We ask for others, as well as for ourselves, that God's gifts, the bodies and the minds, the affections and the desires, the circumstances and the possessions he has given to our humanity, may not be made the occasion of sin. Here too we have a great human prayer that draws us into sympathy with all our kind.

Now, to the petition that God's gifts and orderings may not become to us the occasion of sin, Jesus bids us add the words: "Deliver us from evil." Here is the recognition of God as

the supreme moral deliverer. This is the gospel for the tempted. God has the power to deliver us from evil so that we shall not be overborne by temptation. He can deliver us by all the ways of his grace. He can keep us alert and sensitive to the suggestions of sin. He can strengthen in us the purpose of right, so that we shall not be overcome. He can fill us with good so that evil can not enter. He can give us an inflow of power which shall well up within us in the hour of crisis. He can make us keen to perceive the right course and swift to follow it. Deliverance from evil must come from within ourselves rather than from outward conditions, but within us, the power is of God.

The deliverance from evil which Jesus bids us ask of God, then, is a gift of inner strength. It is such a fortifying of holy purpose within us as shall enable us to repel every suggestion of evil. Positive, rock firm purpose of righteousness is the condition of moral safety. To the forming and sustaining of such a purpose we summon all our moral energies, all our self discipline, all our strength of will; and more than this, we invoke the inflow of the strength of God,

a very stream of divine life within us that shall constantly renew and invigorate our energies, so that our purpose shall not fail.

Deliverance from evil is thus an inner experience that comes through personal union with God in the depths of the soul. In the realm which lies deeper than our conscious life, this deliverance comes; but it records itself in experience as we find our purpose of righteousness kept firm and controlling amidst all the assaults of temptation. This experience is open to us all. It is meant for us. We shall be tempted, but we need not yield. Life may be for us a succession of moral victories. Jesus means this when he bids us pray thus to the Father in heaven.

In concluding this study of the Prayer that Jesus taught, let me emphasize one truth. It is this: Every petition in this prayer is to be offered in firm and confident faith that it will be fulfilled. All are in God's power and in God's will for us. It is in the power and will of God to do these things for us or to release energies within us by which we shall do them for ourselves, so that the fulfillment of these petitions

## THE PRAYER THAT JESUS TAUGHT

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shall be the fashion of our life. It is in the power and will of God that we shall know him as our Father and ourselves as his children; that we shall hallow his Name in reverent recognition of all that is divine; that we shall realize his kingdom in ourselves and shall be co-workers with him in extending it in the world; that we shall do his will in earth as it is done in heaven; that we shall have our daily bread as his gift of love; that we shall be forgiving and forgiven; that under his leading and by his grace we shall be kept strong in spirit and shall find the very occasions of temptation the scenes of glorious deliverance.

His is the kingdom. His is the power. To his Name be the glory.







